



# A framework for integrated early childhood development









## A framework for integrated early childhood development

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting integrated early childhood development. The Department of Education, Training and Employment (the department), drawing on current research and Queensland early childhood program evaluations, has developed a framework that presents a flexible integrated early childhood development model to support quality service delivery through reflective practice.

The framework is a resource to support continued provision of high quality integrated services, and to encourage increased integration across the early childhood development sector.

The framework comprises four sections:

1. Overview of integration
2. A Model for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Queensland
3. Reflective tool to support early childhood development organisations to enhance integration
4. Information and resources to support integrated early childhood development.

## Section 1: Overview of integration

### What is integration?

Integration can take place at different levels, including policy, planning, and within teams (Moore 2008); this framework focuses on integration within *service delivery*.

Integrated service delivery brings together different disciplines and services into a more comprehensive service delivery system, underpinned by a common purpose. Through structuring collaboration, partnerships and networks, usually autonomous organisations can work together to deliver specific community outcomes, potentially reduce duplication of services, enable sharing of resources and increase efficiency.

The degree to which integration occurs within services and across organisations may vary at different times and across different partnerships. As such, integration may be described as a continuum from 'cooperative' to 'coordinated' to 'collaborative' (Keast 2008) practice.

In this framework, we use the term 'integration' to refer to the continuum broadly, with the intention of supporting organisations at all levels of integration to identify within this context.

Not integration	Integration		
Autonomous	Cooperative	Coordinated	Collaborative
Organisations operate independently	Remain independent but network and share information Low commitment Informal arrangements	Some joint planning Often project-based coordination Medium commitment Semi-formal partnerships	Shared culture, visions, values and resources Joint planning and delivery of some services High commitment Formal partnerships




Table is adapted from: Moore 2008; Keast et al. 2009; Productivity Commission 2011; Moore and Skinner 2011.

### Why is integration important in early childhood development?

Early childhood development is a shared responsibility among families, and education, health and family services, and includes community-based approaches. Families today face unique challenges, and many families require holistic responses that cannot always be found in one place or through a single organisation.

An integrated approach to early childhood development is important in supporting strengths-based, flexible approaches, and facilitating holistic responses for children and families. This approach enables families to access multiple services for their children and themselves in a cohesive way. Integrated approaches also seek to maximise the impact of different early childhood disciplines with a clear focus on the child, within the context of their family and community (Press et al. 2009).



There are a number of Queensland early childhood development services that are currently working in an integrated manner. For example, the [Early Years Centres](#) and [children and family centres](#) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families offer a multidisciplinary approach to service provision where child health nurses, early childhood educators and family support workers work collaboratively to deliver universal and targeted services in the community. Other services may be co-located with, or in close proximity to, other community services, and have formed cooperative, coordinated or collaborative relationships with their neighbours; this is often the case at [Child and Family Support Hubs](#), supported playgroups and some childcare services. These and other services may participate in informal networks of providers, and have established referral pathways. They are all forms of integration and how they operate is represented in the department's model for integrated early childhood development services described in Section 2.

### What are the benefits of integrated early childhood development?

Research suggests integrated services contribute to improved outcomes in family functioning and children's wellbeing by improving access to services, enabling early identification of problems (Moore 2010), enhancing referral pathways and providing holistic responses for families, as evidenced in evaluations of national and international models.

In Australia, *Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy* identifies 'integration, whether physical or virtual, that encourages interdisciplinary approaches to meeting the needs of children and their families' as an important component of an effective early childhood development system (Council of Australian Governments 2009). Research also suggests that it is not the type of integration that delivers improved outcomes, but rather the *quality* of integration and services (Moore 2010).

Integration should be 'responsive to community needs and guided by clear goals, values and mission to bring people together in common purpose' (Wong et al. 2012). We know there are also a number of challenges to integrated working, including the time it takes to establish, and the human and financial resources required; therefore, moving towards a more flexible approach through greater integration should be as a result of thorough research, planning and community consultation.

All services that are regulated by the National Law are required to work within the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care. This includes a set of National Quality Standards, one of which focuses on the importance of collaborating with other organisations to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.



## Section 2: A Model for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Queensland

The department has developed a Model for Integrated Early Childhood Development that is informed by the evaluation of the Early Years Centres initiative, and reflects the literature about integration and the experiences of Queensland organisations. It is a flexible model that can be applied across the range of early childhood development services in Queensland because it supports the concept that integration occurs in many forms, and practice continually moves along a continuum.

The model has three layers:

1. Underlying early childhood development concepts form the foundation of the model — these core concepts are derived from the literature on the importance of early childhood development and inform the other two layers of the model.
2. Service delivery elements of the integrated model reflect practical approaches and dimensions of integrated service delivery.
3. Enablers are the operational functions an organisation uses to translate the service delivery elements into practice and maintain the integrity of the model.

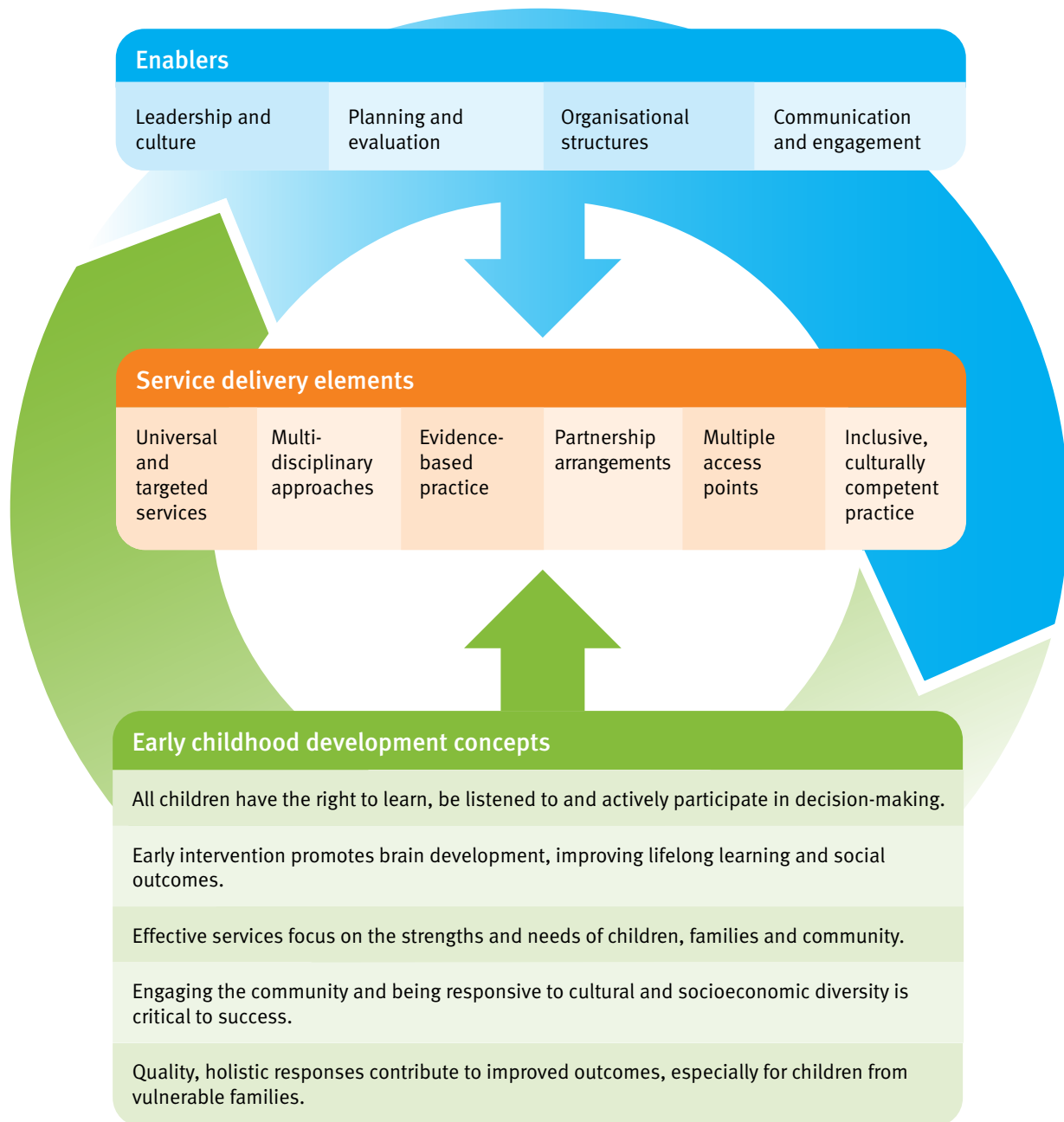
Rather than looking at each layer separately, it is the relationships across all three layers that define the integrated early childhood development model.

This model is flexible to adapt to the range of services provided in Queensland, and to community needs and aspirations. The model is underpinned by reflective practice to assist organisations to think about their service delivery in this context. To support this, the next section of the framework presents a *Reflective tool for integrated early childhood development*.

The department does not expect that every organisation would implement all components of the model; however, all organisations working in early childhood development — large or small — should be able to see their work within the model or use components of the reflective tool to assist them further with integration.



## A model for integrated early childhood development



Service delivery elements are defined in the [glossary](#).







# Section 3: Reflective tool for integrated early childhood development

## Reflective practice

Reflective practice is a familiar concept, and is often adopted in early childhood development disciplines. It ‘is a cycle of ongoing learning that occurs when we take the time to “stop, think and change”’ (O’Connor & Diggins 2002). Working in an integrated setting can be complex and challenging, and a reflective approach can assist in building understanding and consensus when used jointly with partners.

## Purpose of the reflective tool

The department, in consultation with funded providers, has developed a tool that uses reflective questions to support organisations to analyse how they work in collaboration, and how they may improve the ways they work with other organisations.

Another purpose of the reflective tool is to enhance understanding and articulation of the Model for Integrated Early Childhood Development. The reflective tool focuses on the enablers of integrated early childhood development as outlined in the model.

## How to use the reflective tool

The reflective tool may be used by staff, management committees/boards, partners and volunteers to discuss the delivery of integrated services and consider options for improvement or change.

The reflective questions are intended to build understanding of the concepts, enablers and service delivery elements presented in the Model for Integrated Early Childhood Development, and act as a starting point for consideration of an organisation’s integrated practices.

Enablers			
Leadership and culture	Planning and evaluation	Organisational structures	Communication and engagement

Service delivery elements					
Universal and targeted services	Multi-disciplinary approaches	Evidence-based practice	Partnership arrangements	Multiple access points	Inclusive, culturally competent practice

Reflecting on what enables integration may assist organisations to consider the way in which they operate within communities, their organisational strengths and opportunities, and how to strengthen engagement and partnerships with other organisations. An organisation may choose to periodically revisit the reflective tool to consider the impacts of changes implemented or further work required.

There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of this reflection approach is to promote and encourage discussion within organisations, and it is recommended that discussions be documented to assist in further planning and review.

The reflective tool is enhanced, in blue text, with short examples and case studies from Queensland services to illustrate the successes, challenges and variety of approaches to integrated early childhood development.

## Leadership and culture

### Understanding

Leadership and culture support the development of common aspirations, build understanding and support opportunities and conditions that enable integrated working.

Leadership — provided through boards, management committees and observed in service managers, coordinators and community members — is a crucial enabler of integration. Integration is a challenge that takes patience and commitment and requires leadership that is influential, creative and able to identify and stick to a long-term strategy.

Organisational cultures that promote openness, trust and respect (Wong et al. 2012), as well as supporting staff to work towards a shared vision, common goals, understanding, and nurturing potential leaders (Whalley 2012), are vital.

### Starting to think

**In your environment, does leadership and culture enable integrated early childhood development?**

- Are there integration champions (people who advocate for and support integrated approaches)? Who in the organisation would make a good integration champion? What characteristics do they have?
- Does leadership promote the shared vision, benefits and challenges of integration? Can you think of examples where this happens?
- Are leaders open to new ideas and creative solutions?
- How are leadership positions allocated and filled? Are candidates drawn from different disciplines?
- Is the leadership structure enabling or hindering integrated working? What structural changes could improve integrated working?
- Are there opportunities for others to lead? What opportunities exist or can be created for leaders to work together on projects and with partner agencies?

*At the North Gold Coast Early Years Centre, staff interests and skills are highly valued, but so are their passions. Staff are often given opportunities to lead the projects that really matter to them.*

- Who is represented on the governing body, and why?
- In what ways do organisational values, norms, history, traditions and ethics (Jorde Bloom et al. 1991) support a movement towards greater integration? Do they hinder?



*A primary health care model used by Kambu Medical Services at Ipswich children and family centre (CFC) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families enhances the holistic support available to families attending the CFC's playgroups. Health professionals are on site interacting with families and playgroup staff. They are able to help identify when children's development or behaviour may be affected by underlying health issues, and link families to health services on the spot.*

- How are successes recognised, acknowledged, shared and celebrated?

*Integrated team meetings at the North Gold Coast Early Years Centre include an agenda item dedicated to sharing 'good news' stories and successes.*

## Reflecting

The questions below will explore how leadership and culture enable the service delivery elements of the model.

How is leadership organised within **universal or targeted services**?

- What role does your organisation see new partnerships taking? To enhance universal or targeted services? Fill service gaps?

How does the leadership and culture enable individuals and teams to work in a **multidisciplinary approach**?

- Is there dedicated time and resources to support multidisciplinary approaches? If not, how could this be improved?
- Is time allocated for reflective practice?
- Are there joint team meetings across disciplines or partners?
- Are staff supported with professional development to help them understand and enhance integration and multidisciplinary working?
- How can differences/commonalities in understanding across disciplines be used to improve service delivery?

Is **evidence-based practice** prioritised?

- Does leadership promote knowledge of integration and early childhood development theory, evidence and practice? In what ways are leaders connected with research? What websites and resources are shared with staff?

*The CEO of Ganyjuu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support Services is an enthusiastic advocate for integrated service delivery approaches. She stays up to date on emerging research, and whenever she finds particularly useful pieces of information, she shares them with staff.*

- Does the culture reflect the importance of collecting and using evidence? How could data and research be used more effectively?

Is there a culture of effective **partnership arrangements**?

- Is the culture one of trusting, respectful relationships across disciplines and partners? What do you do to improve relationships?
- Is there a focus on teamwork and joint decision-making, where appropriate? What tools exist to support this (agreements, policies or strategies)?



*The Redland-Bayside Child and Family Support Hub Coordinator meets regularly with a colleague from a partner organisation to discuss shared cases. To facilitate this multidisciplinary practice, the Hub Coordinator developed set questions to guide their discussions and help keep them on track. It's a simple tool that makes collaboration easier.*

- Does leadership participate and encourage staff to effectively participate in local forums and networks?
- How does leadership ensure the organisation supports integration in daily practice? For example, is there integrated case management, or communication to bring staff together and stay informed across disciplines?

*Cairns Early Years Centre uses a 'Theme of the Week', which is carried by staff across all meetings, activities, planning, delivery and engagement with families. They create tip sheets to explore different aspects of each week's theme, offering a platform for staff to share knowledge and apply multidisciplinary expertise for a joint purpose.*

Does leadership find ways for the community to reach services through **multiple access points**?

- How are staff supported in the delivery of services in the community away from the main centre or office?
- How are staff working across locations included in shared communication, planning and activities?

Does leadership ensure all staff work in an **inclusive and culturally competent** manner?

- Are there professional development opportunities to support this?
- Who are the community leaders, and how do they provide formal and informal advice or direction to the organisation?
- Are there opportunities for local community leaders to connect with or mentor staff?

## Planning and evaluation

### Understanding

Appropriate review, evaluation and planning enable integrated service delivery through continuous improvement within and across organisations. Examples may include:

- critical assessment of specific aspects of service delivery or organisational support within team meetings
- developing program evaluation approaches for service users
- development of video and photographic studies for discussion
- engaging with clients and community leaders and understanding their needs
- formal external evaluation of a program, multidisciplinary approaches and service delivery.

Planning and evaluation support organisations to identify and use evidence-based programs and tools. This evidence-based practice allows organisations to demonstrate the effectiveness (or otherwise) of programs and integrated service delivery approaches, and identify outcomes for children and families.



## Starting to think

**In your environment, does evaluation and planning enable integration?**

- How is continuous improvement in integrated service delivery ensured?
- What have you learnt from programs or activities that did not go as planned?
- How often is the strategic focus reviewed? Are governance structures also reviewed?
- Is there a regular joint review with relevant collaborating organisations? How is the integration/collaboration functioning? Is it adding value for families?

*The Caboolture Early Years Centre makes the effort quarterly to bring together staff from all disciplines to reflect on how the integrated process is working. These are formal meetings with set agendas and minutes recorded to ensure progress of the integrated approach is documented and the information available for future reference.*

*Also see ARACY's Advancing Collaboration Practice – Fact Sheet 10 – Evaluating collaborations. (<http://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/area?command=record&id=29>)*

- How are the voices of children and families heard in organisational and service delivery review and planning?

## Reflecting

The questions below will explore how planning and evaluation enables the service delivery elements of the model.

**Are universal and targeted services** contributing to provision of a holistic service?

*At the Browns Plains Early Years Centre, child health nurses work alongside early childhood educators. When the mothers come to the clinic for their babies' health checks, they are able to speak to one of the educators, giving them the opportunity to raise concerns, gain advice and learn about other programs on offer at the centre. They are encouraged to join the 'Chitty Chat' program, which provides a contact point for families to talk to staff, meet other parents and access the centre's books and toys.*

- Are services collaboratively addressing service gaps where possible? How does this happen?
- Are services delivered in a way that reflects a commitment to the values and strategic objectives of working holistically with children and families?

**Is there a multidisciplinary approach** to planning services?

- How are different professional perspectives used to support the provision of **universal or targeted services**? What are the benefits for families and children using these services?

*In Cairns, Mookai Rosie Bi-Bayan provides a home away from home for women who come to prepare for their babies' birth or attend medical appointments not available in their far northern communities. One of their integrated, family-friendly programs is the Bi-Bayan Playgroup. The playgroup works with other members of the team to offer holistic parenting support, including culturally supportive behaviour management, nutrition programs, and advocacy and referral pathways for children with developmental concerns. This is a great example of tailoring the content and intensity of a universal service to meet the varied needs of diverse clients.*

- Is expertise of different disciplines sought when needed?

*During one of the Redland-Bayside Child and Family Support Hub coordinator's regular catch ups with a partner organisation, this partner mentioned that a number of her clients were struggling with infant sleep issues. While the current services were sufficient in many cases, sometimes more help was needed. The hub coordinator was able to connect this partner with another partner at a local family centre, so they could learn more about each other's programs and how they could jointly support these clients. By maintaining strong relationships and taking the time to talk with partner organisations, the Hub Coordinator is able to enhance the local service network and referral pathways in the community.*

How is research **evidence** used in developing and implementing integrated service delivery approaches?

*At Browns Plains Early Years Centre staff strive to ensure services are responsive to local needs. They seek feedback from families and importantly use their local Australian Early Development Index data to enhance their understanding of the needs of the children in their catchment area.*

Are **partnership arrangements** and the integrated service delivery approach evaluated regularly and revised as required?

- Do partners meet regularly to address changing community needs and plan service delivery accordingly?

*North Gold Coast Early Years Centre uses an integrated case management approach to planning. At integrated case conferences, staff and partners across disciplines go through referrals together and make decisions about the best way to work with each family. Everybody knows what everyone else is doing, and planning is very much a family-by-family situation.*

- What mechanisms are in place to support planning for programs, services and clients? Do you meet with other organisations to do regular service review?
- How are different partners' and families' strengths recognised in planning?

Is local information and data reviewed to ensure there are **multiple access points** that reach out to the community? To better understand the community? For example, are some communities more likely to participate if you take the service to them?

How do you ensure planning is **inclusive**?

Do you review the **cultural competence** of staff and partners?

- Are there mechanisms for collecting feedback, including complaints, from staff and community?

*Listening to the community is very important at North Gold Coast Early Years Centre. They hold regular morning teas during which they ask for feedback from families. One staff member's role is to be the 'parent liaison', and she goes from group to group to find out what parents think of the service and what they need.*

- When planning services, do you consider the cultural barriers and enablers to support diverse families?
- In what ways are staff, programming and diversity valued?





## Organisational structures

### Understanding

Organisational structures that enable multidisciplinary work are critical for effective integrated service provision, and require responsive and innovative ways of working (Press et al. 2009). When operating in integrated environments, where working with parents to support children's development and learning is a priority, taking time to focus on organisational structures like policies, procedures and resources is important. This helps ensure that similarities, and differences, across partners and disciplines can be identified and practices streamlined (Press et al. 2009).

Organisational structures support workers from different disciplines to navigate differences in philosophy, language and practice. Establishing collaborative structures and systems is very important; however, achieving collaboration in practice requires ongoing focus and deliberate action.

### Starting to think

**In your environment, do organisational structures enable integrated early childhood development?**

- What resources are necessary to support integrated service delivery?
- Could existing resources be reallocated to better support integrated service delivery?
- If additional tools and resources are required, how will these be secured in ways that are sustainable?
- Have systems, structures and processes been developed to contribute to the organisation's vision and direction?
- Do processes exist to support appropriate exchange of information across partners?

*At the Cairns Early Years Centre, The Benevolent Society and Cairns and Hinterland Health and Hospital Service jointly undertake recruitment for the integrated centre, with both participating on interview and selection panels, regardless of which organisation funds the position.*

### Reflecting

The questions below will explore how organisational structures enable the service delivery elements of the model.

Do the organisational structures support provision of **universal and targeted services**?

- Are resources available to assist families to access services? For example, are program schedules accessible in person and online? Is information about other services available? How are staff supported to stay informed of other community services?
- Do operational policies reflect a holistic approach to service delivery? Are they flexible to meet the wide ranging needs of children and families? How do they support partnerships and referral pathways across a range of service types?

Do organisational structures advocate, respect and value **multidisciplinary approaches**?

- Is there a common understanding of multidisciplinary approaches?
- Are there shared team-building activities, multidisciplinary training or professional 'swaps'?

*The CEO of Ganyjuu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Family Support Services undertook a temporary secondment with The Benevolent Society at the Browns Plains Early Years Centre. This enabled her to work within, and gain understanding of, their integrated model, and provide advice on the practice, management and governance arrangements required to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, specialists and families. This kind of secondment can be crucial for mainstream organisations to gain cultural competence and improve their services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.*

- How does the physical environment influence practice across different disciplines? Consider location of the service, including co-location with another service, school or within a culturally specific service. How does furniture arrangement, use of lighting and colour promote or inhibit particular ways of working.

Are there systems for sharing **evidence-based practice**, knowledge and understanding?

*One staff member at Browns Plains Early Years Centre commented, 'A lot of the information [we provide] reinforces what parents already know, [but] when they know it is based in theory, it builds confidence.'*

How do organisational structures effectively support **working in partnership** and integrated service delivery? Or do they constrict it?

- How do recruitment and induction policies support integration?

*At the Cairns Early Years Centre, The Benevolent Society and Cairns and Hinterland Health and Hospital Service jointly undertake recruitment for the integrated centre, with both participating on interview and selection panels, regardless of which organisation funds the position.*

- Are policies, procedures and resources shared with other organisations?
- Are partnered organisations' purposes aligned with yours or complementary?
- Are there formal or informal partnership arrangements, and are they effective?

*At the Caboolture Early Years Centre, staff recognise that it took a while for everyone to get their heads around who did what when they first started working in an integrated way. To help the process along, they jointly created a plan which formalised staff roles. After six months, people became more comfortable with the integrated model and individual challenges were worked through.*

- Are there formalised processes for decision-making with partner organisations? Are they working well?

How do the organisational structures support service delivery from **multiple access points**?

How do policies support the development of common understandings about **inclusion** and ways to promote children's development and learning?

- Do steering groups include partners and representatives from the community? Are diverse families represented?
- Are physical environments culturally appropriate and welcoming to families and specific target groups? How could this be improved?



## Communication and engagement

### Understanding

‘Don’t start with what you think is a good idea for the community — start with what the community wants!’ (Whalley 2012)

Community engagement is not about ‘doing to’ the community, but about engaging with and empowering the community. Inherent in the community engagement process is both initial and ongoing involvement of community stakeholders in the decision-making processes that constitute collaborative activity (Collins et al. 2007). Engagement occurs with families, the local community, within the organisation, with partner agencies.

Holistic responses require frequent and strategic sharing of information across colleagues, disciplines and partners. Along with engagement, this enables strengths-based approaches that rely on developing an understanding of, and working with, local communities to consider individual and community collective strengths to assist them to address their challenges (Steward et al. 2011).

### Starting to think

**In your environment, is communication and engagement an enabler of integrated early childhood development?**

- Is the local community understood? How do you know?
- How do you ensure families and children are the focus of service planning and service delivery? Do you seek their feedback on programs and services? Do they provide input into planning their support?
- Are services responsive to local needs? How is local participation encouraged and supported?
- How are the organisation’s vision and goals communicated throughout the organisation, with partner agencies and to users of the service?

### Reflecting

The questions below explore how communication and engagement enables the service delivery elements of the model.

How do you ensure **universal services** are welcoming to the whole community?

- Are local cultures and languages represented in communication materials and service atmosphere, e.g. artwork?
- How do you engage with diverse cultural groups in the community to encourage participation?
- Have you developed a good understanding of their needs?

*All of the Early Years Centres hold ‘Community Days’ and events in local parks to bring staff and partner organisations together and promote services in the community. Fun activities are open to all and draw families from across the community. They also try to employ staff who represent local community cultures as much as possible.*

- Do staff and partners engage with families and recognise when more **targeted** or intensive services may be needed? Are there information-sharing channels and referral pathways to facilitate this?



Different professional disciplines have different meanings for similar phrases. How does the organisation establish shared definitions for commonly used words across the **multiple disciplines**? Consider for example: play, child, child-centred, parent, parenting, strengths-based, holistic.

- Do these commonly used words have the same meaning in the community? Do you discuss the differences?
- Is communication across disciplines respectful and built on trusting relationships?

Do forums exist locally to bring together staff from across organisations and sectors to share knowledge, expertise and **evidence-based practices**?

*A group of Child and Family Support Hubs have formed their own local hub network. Hub coordinators from Maryborough, Gympie, Hervey Bay and Childers meet quarterly, along with other colleagues, to discuss common issues and develop solutions. Recognising a common need to work more closely with school principals, the group is now working together on strategies to achieve this.*

- Are successes and challenges communicated across staff and partners?

How do **partnership arrangements** engage children, families and the community?

- Are resources for families and communities shared across partner organisations? For example, toy libraries?
- Are partners, children, families and local community leaders engaged in service planning, decision-making and priority-setting? How could this be improved?

How are **multiple service access points**, like outreach or mobile services, promoted in the community?

How do staff build **inclusion and cultural awareness** and continuously seek to improve engagement of diversity?

What are the diverse groups in the community? How do you engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse families, newly arrived migrants and refugees, other vulnerable population groups? (Prichard et al. 2010)



## Section 4: Information and resources to support integrated early childhood development

### Integrated Early Childhood Development Model – service delivery element glossary

Services can be delivered in many ways. The service delivery elements defined in the Model for Integrated Early Childhood Development are those identified as the key methods and characteristics that are critical to supporting delivery of effective integrated services for young children and their families.

#### Universal and targeted services

Universal services are directed at the whole population, are accessible to everyone and are delivered in a non-stigmatising way. They are used by children and their families in their normal life course. Some examples include child health services, playgroups, early childhood education and care, and schools. Universal services often function as soft entry points for families to then access more specialised supports.

Targeted services are directed to individuals, groups or communities at higher risk than the general population, or with identified needs. Some examples include services available to children with a disability, communication difficulties or behavioural problems, young parents, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and culturally and linguistically diverse families.

#### Multidisciplinary approaches

A multidisciplinary approach involves staff from different professions (often early childhood educators, social/family support workers, and child and allied health professionals) working together to deliver services and provide resources in a manner that is most effective for the family, rather than a siloed approach based on specific professional disciplines. 'It does not mean that everyone does the same thing — or each other's jobs. There are legitimate practice boundaries and specialisations that apply according to service and client needs' (*Evaluation of the Early Years Centre initiative – summary report* 2013). As the degree of integration across services becomes more sophisticated, we would expect to see an evolution towards interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary working (see page 18 in Moore and Skinner's 2011 *Background paper: An integrated approach to early childhood development* for more information).

#### Evidence-based practice

Evidence-based practice draws from empirical research evidence (both qualitative and quantitative) of what works best to achieve the desired outcomes for different families in different circumstances. In turn, it contributes through objective evaluation to the body of research that informs practice revision, future policy development and continuous improvement in practice models.





## Partnership arrangements

Partnership arrangements can be formal and informal. Formal arrangements may include establishing a community partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding. Partnership arrangements may be put in place to help articulate roles and responsibilities or processes for information sharing, or to formalise processes for referral pathways. Participating in local networks may also be a form of partnership arrangements.

‘Partnerships [can be] between families and service providers, between service providers, and between government and service providers’ (Moore 2012, p. 8.).

## Multiple access points

This enabler is important because families are more likely to access services if they are more readily available in the community. Access points may include stand-alone centres or community hubs, centres or hubs with smaller centres in surrounding communities, home visiting, outreach, mobile or virtual services.

Home visiting services offer practical support to children and families in their own home. Home visits and support are provided by trained professionals on a one-to-one basis.

Outreach and mobile services include programs or activities delivered within the local community area, and bring services to the community rather than the community coming to a centre or hub. These may be delivered from community spaces such as parks or community halls; it may also occur within other services to provide additional support or training — for example, extra support to children at school or in a childcare centre.

Virtual access points may include websites, social media sites or helplines where communities can access information.

## Inclusive, culturally competent practice

Inclusion can be described as the participatory, authentic and accountable manner in which organisations uphold and reinforce the principles of access and equity. Being inclusive dictates the manner in which organisations understand and engage their communities, as well as how they explore, view and challenge barriers, values and behaviours (Social Inclusion Audit 2010).

Culturally competent practice involves being responsive and sensitive to, and respectful of, the cultural and social beliefs, values and practices of all cultural groups, so that children and families have the opportunity to access all services provided. There are many factors which can limit family access to services, such as language barriers, lack of information about services, and fear of perceived ‘authority’.

Culturally competent engagement requires explicit recognition of the diversity of family circumstances, structures and beliefs about children and parenting roles across cultures and traditions.

## More information

Information, tools and resources about integration and the concepts raised in this framework are readily available. A selection is provided below.

**P** Paper / Article   **T** Tool   **W** Website   **F** Framework / Strategy

## Understanding integration and collaboration

---

- W** [\*Advancing collaboration fact sheets series 2009–2011\*](#) – ARACY 2010  
This is a series of fact sheets on collaboration, developed by Mandell and Keast for ARACY in 2010.
- P** [\*Coordinated and integrated human service delivery models, Final report\*](#) – Fine, Pancharatnam & Thomson 2000  
A report prepared for the New South Wales Cabinet Office, which presents empirical evidence of the use of coordinated and integrated approaches to human service delivery. Describes different models of service integration, and identifies some major integration initiatives that were being implemented and trialled in NSW at the time.
- P** [\*Inter-agency working: Good intentions and interaction dynamics\*](#) – Keast, Glasby & Brown 2009  
This paper explores inter-agency working, and examines the implications of inter-agency operations for delivering multi-domain service outcomes, and investigates cases of inter-agency programs to understand the dimensions and limitations of inter-agency working. The paper concludes by offering a framework for better inter-agency working that has applicability across all sectors.
- P** [\*Closing gaps and opening doors: The function of an integrated homelessness service system – place-based network analysis and case studies, Final report\*](#) – Keast 2008  
The key findings on the themes of integration, strategic level innovation, and recommendations for action are very useful and applicable to other human services, including early childhood.
- P** [\*Background paper: An integrated approach to early childhood development\*](#) – Moore 2010  
Provides contextual information about integration and advice on how to move towards greater integration of the various elements of support and/or services needed by children and their families.
- P** [\*Improving development outcomes for children through effective practice in integrating early years services\*](#) – Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford 2009  
This review from the UK aims to draw out the key ‘what works?’ messages on integrated services in the early years.



## Implementing integration and collaboration

---

- P** [\*Integrated early years provision in Australia\*](#) – Press, Sumsion & Wong 2009

The focus of this report for the Professional Support Coordinators Alliance is how integrated service delivery is supported and achieved. It conveys the findings from a national survey of Australian integrated services and case studies.
- P** [\*May do, should do, can do: Collaboration between Commonwealth and state service systems for vulnerable children\*](#) – Winkworth & White 2010

Authors propose a theoretical framework for examining the status of collaboration across state and Commonwealth systems in two Victorian localities. Article includes an analysis of key enablers and barriers to the development of collaborative models for supporting vulnerable children and their families.
- P** [\*Evaluation of Victorian children's centres: Literature review\*](#) – Moore 2008

This literature review was conducted as Stage 1 of the evaluation of Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development children's centres, with the overall aim of identifying best practice approaches to the establishment and operation of children's hubs.

## Measuring integration and collaboration

---

- T** [\*Toronto First Duty – indicators of change\*](#)

The Toronto First Duty initiative is a service delivery system that aims to provide a seamless blend of integrated early learning, care, services and supports for all young children and their families in defined communities. This is a management tool that guides, tracks, and assesses the progress a site is making towards the integration of programs that are linked to early intervention, community and public health, and social services.
- T** [\*Partnership analysis tool\*](#)

This tool, from Vic Health, has a health promotion focus, but can be used to analyse partnerships in early childhood development as well.
- T** [\*Collaboration factors inventory\*](#) – Wilder Research

This collaboration assessment tool, developed in the United States, is a free online resource that can be used either individually or by a group to assess inter-organisation collaborations.
- P** [\*Fact sheet 10 – Evaluating collaborations\*](#)

Part of the ARACY series of fact sheets on collaboration this one includes a simple checklist that would enable a preliminary evaluation.

## Communication, engagement, inclusion and cultural competence

- T [\*Resource kit: For starting and sustaining Early Years Networks\*](#) – Western Australia Department for Communities  
This practical resource is designed for the WA Early Years Networks, but contains useful information, tools and tips for community engagement and capacity-building activities.
- T [\*Working and walking together\*](#) – SNAICC  
This resource from The Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc. supports services to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and organisations in a culturally appropriate way.
- T [\*Are disadvantaged families ‘hard to reach’?\*](#) – CAFCA  
This is a practice sheet from Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia that provides ideas for practitioners and policymakers about how to increase engagement of disadvantaged families in child and family services and programs.
- W [\*Interagency collaboration – Part A: What is it, what does it look like, when is it needed and what supports it?\*](#) – AFRC Briefing 21-A 2011  
See Box 1 on the benefits and risk of involving families in interagency collaborations.
- W [\*Western Australia’s Early Years Networks\*](#)  
Contains overviews of what these Western Australian towns and communities are doing through local Early Years Networks.
- P [\*Social inclusion in early childhood development\*](#) – DEEWR, 2009  
This research paper provides an overview of the importance of early childhood development and outlines policy and practice approaches to an inclusive early childhood development system.
- P [\*Father inclusive practice\*](#) – Western Australia Department for Communities  
This is a background policy paper about father inclusive practice.
- T [\*Aboriginal child friendly communities toolkit: Inclusion of the early years\*](#) – Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia in partnership with The Lower Nicola Band School 2010  
This toolkit was developed as a resource for Aboriginal organisations and communities in British Columbia, Canada, to support groups and communities in determining their effectiveness in being inclusive and child-friendly. The target age range is 0 to 6 years; however, the toolkit can be helpful for all ages, families and communities across cultures.



## Effective leadership

---

- P** [\*Highly effective leadership in children's centres\*](#) – Sharp et al. 2012
- From the UK and based on the experiences of leaders at the Sure Start children's centres, this paper reflects on what works, what is valued and what leadership behaviours make a real and sustained difference.

## Continuous improvement

---

- W** [\*Measuring outcomes for children, families and communities\*](#) – Family and Community Services, New Zealand
- This website contains information about results based accountability, which is a simple, common-sense framework for organisations to keep the focus on the results or outcomes of their work with communities, families and clients.
- P** [\*Measuring the outcomes of community organisations\*](#) - Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth 2009
- This paper presents a summary of research into the use and effectiveness of outcomes measurement frameworks for community organisations.

## Co-location and resource sharing

---

- W** [\*Co-location and other resource-sharing arrangements\*](#) – Spall and Watters
- This article on the Community Door website describes the models, benefits and challenges of co-location and resource-sharing for community organisations.

## Integrated early years frameworks and strategies

---

- P** [\*Evaluation of the Early Years Centre initiative – summary report\*](#) – Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment 2013
- This report presents a summary of the findings of the independent evaluation of the Early Years Centre initiative conducted from December 2010 to October 2012. The report highlights the centres' strengths as including integrated multidisciplinary planning and delivery, a mix of universal and targeted services, engaging diverse families, building community capacity and establishing strong partnerships.
- F** [\*Moving forward together: A guide to support the integration of service delivery for children and families\*](#) – Prichard, Purdon & Chaplyn 2010
- From the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, this paper draws on the early experiences of Tasmanian Child and Family Centres in creating integrated services for families and children across Tasmania, to draw attention to the change required in providing integrated services for children, families and communities. It also presents a guide to bringing about this change, with strategies that can be used to overcome challenges. It contains a useful diagram depicting the continuum of integrated service delivery.



- F [Evaluation of Victorian children's centres – Framework to support the establishment and operation of children's centres](#) – Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2010
- The Victorian Government provides capital grants for the construction of integrated children's centres. This publication outlines the framework for establishing and operating these centres.
- F [Sure Start](#)
- Sure Start is the UK Government's program to support children, families and communities through the integration of early education, child care, health and family support. This program has been extensively evaluated, and there are a range of reports on the UK Department of Education website.
- F [Toronto First Duty](#)
- The Toronto First Duty initiative is a service delivery system that aims to provide a seamless blend of integrated early learning, care, services and supports for all young children and their families in defined communities. Its website contains the final evaluation report, along with numerous progress reports and resources developed throughout the initiative.
- P [Communities for Children](#)
- This place-based intervention is designed to enhance the development of children in 45 disadvantaged communities around Australia. The initiative aims to improve coordination of services for children 0–5 years old and their families, identify and provide services to address unmet needs, build community capacity to engage in service delivery, and improve the community context in which children grow up.
- F [Platforms Service Redevelopment Framework](#) – Centre for Community Child Health
- This framework is based on the compelling research about the importance of the early years and their impact on the life course, in addition to the emerging evidence about how communities can make a difference for children and their families. It includes a guide to integrated service delivery. *Note, this is not a free resource.*
- F [Working together for children's success: An early years integration strategy](#) – Toronto District School Board 2007
- Based on the Toronto First Duty model, this document outlines the School Board's strategy for promoting an integrated approach to the delivery of education, care and family support services.
- F [SDN Children's Services Inc.](#)
- SDN Children's Services is a not-for profit organisation that provides quality early childhood education and care in New South Wales. Its website contains a series of papers emerging from evaluations of SDN's programs for children and families. The overall purpose of the investigations was to examine whether and how these programs:
- support and enhance children's development and families in their parenting, and contribute to local community capacity to support families
  - support children's services to include children from target groups
  - are impacted by the organisational structures of, and staff relationships within, the programs
  - are supported in service delivery by the integrated nature of the CFCS programs.



## Early childhood development, early childhood education and care

---

- F** [\*Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy\*](#) – Council of Australian Governments 2009

This strategy is a collaborative effort between the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments to ensure that by 2020, all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation.
- W** [Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority \(ACEQA\)](#)

The ACEQA website contains extensive information and resources relating to the early childhood education and care sector, including the National Quality Framework.
- P** [Guide to the National Quality Standard](#)

This guide outlines each of the seven quality areas, and assists services to complete the self-assessment and quality improvement planning process by evaluating their current practices and identifying which practices they can or should improve.
- F** [Early Years Learning Framework](#)

This framework is part of the Council of Australian Government’s reform agenda for early childhood education and care, and is a key component of the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care. The Early Years Learning Framework describes the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children’s learning from birth to 5 years of age, as well as their transition to school.
- W** [Australian Institute of Family Studies](#)

The AIFS is the Australian Government’s key research body in the area of family wellbeing. There is a range of useful publications on its website.
- W** [Early Childhood Australia](#)

As the peak national, non-profit, non-government organisation for early childhood sector, its website contains extensive information across a range issues affecting the sector.
- W** [Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth \(ARACY\)](#)

ARACY undertakes and shares research to develop practical solutions to issues affecting the health, development and wellbeing of young Australians.
- W** [Centre for Community Child Health](#)

CCCH in Victoria conducts extensive research into early childhood development and behaviour issues.







## References

- Collins, R et al. 2007. Community engagement as a cornerstone enabling learning and teaching and research in the post modern world. *Australasian Journal of University Community Engagement*. Vol 2, No 1. pp. 88–92.
- Council of Australian Governments. 2009. *Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy*. Commonwealth of Australia.
- Hamlin, R.G., Keep, J. & Ash, K. 2001. *Organisational change and development: A reflective guide for managers, trainers and developers*. Financial Times Pitman Publishing. London. pp. 39–60.
- Jorde Bloom, P., Sheerer, M. & Britz, Joan. 1991. *Blueprint for action*. Gryphon House. Mt Rainier, Maryland.
- Keast, R. as cited in Keast, R, et al. 2008. *Closing gaps and opening doors: the function of an integrated homelessness service system*. Department of Communities. Queensland.
- Keast, R. et al. 2009. *Inter-agency working: Good intentions and interaction dynamics*. 13th International Research Society for Public Management Conference (IRSPM XIII), 6–8 April 2009. Copenhagen Business School.
- Moore, T. 2008. *Evaluation of Victorian Children’s Centres: Literature review*. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Victoria.
- Moore, T. 2012. *Place-based initiatives transforming communities: Proceedings from the place-based approaches roundtable*. Centre for Community Child Health. p. 8.
- Moore, T. & Skinner, A. 2011. *Background paper: An integrated approach to early childhood development*. The Benevolent Society. Paddington, New South Wales.
- O’Connor, A. & Diggins, C. 2002. *On reflection: Reflective practice for early childhood educators*. Open Mind Publishing: Lower Hutt, Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Press, F., Sumsion, J. & Wong, S. 2009. *Integrated early years provision in Australia*. Charles Sturt University for the Professional Support Coordinators Alliance.
- Prichard, P., Purdon, S. & Chaplyn, J. 2010. *Moving forward together: A guide to support the integration of service delivery for children and families*. Murdoch Children’s Research Institute. Melbourne, Victoria.
- Productivity Commission. 2011, *Early childhood development workforce*, Research report, Melbourne.
- Social Inclusion Audit. 2010. *What is social inclusion? Social Inclusion Audit*. Canadian Urban Libraries Council. Accessed at [www.siatoolkit.com](http://www.siatoolkit.com).
- Steward, J., Lohoar, S. & Higgins, D. 2011. *Effective practices for service delivery coordination in Indigenous communities*. Resource Sheet No. 8 for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Whalley, M. 2012. *National Symposium on early childhood development: an emerging profession*. 24–25 September 2012. Adelaide.
- Wong, S. et al. 2012 *Supporting professional learning in an integrated context: A resource for early childhood leaders*. Professional Support Coordinator Alliance. Charles Sturt University.

